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ABSTRACT

Human service agencies, including public schools and institutions of higher education, are playing an increasingly dominant role in the lives of all citizens, especially the poor. The increasingly bureaucratic nature of these agencies has been contributing to the continued powerlessness and dependence of their growing clientele. The perception by human service agencies of their role in the community can be refocused on assisting the poor in developing self-help and self-direction programs through community-based education. Three illustrations of ways in which these agencies can become involved in community-based education are presented in this document, including a parenting program involving several agencies, a high school-based inter-agency council aimed at solving needs of high school-aged community residents, and an urban cooperative extension program modeled on rural agricultural extension programs. (PGD)

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COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATION

Paper Number THREE

THREE TECHNIQUES FOR INVOLVING HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES IN COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION

Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Center

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COMMUNITY
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THREE

THREE TECHNIQUES FOR INVOLVING HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES IN COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION

Barbara L. Jackson

Edited by
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Introduction

Donald W. Parker
Director
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This is the third of four separate papers on Community-Based Education that have been prepared by the Recruitment and Community Technical Resource Centers. This paper discusses ways in which human service agencies can be utilized as resources for community-based education. While the examples presented are not descriptions of activities which have occurred in other Teacher Corps sites, I think projects should find these perspectives useful.

The realization and demonstration of community-based education as a process for improving the delivery and quality of education is possible through Teacher Corps projects. However, this can be only done if certain conditions are met. Among these conditions are: a realization that educational needs must be determined jointly; that community resource organizations must work together to bring about improvements in existing educational programs; and that in order to institutionalize improvements, institutional and financial commitments must be established and agreed upon by all of the collaborators. This process takes time, Teacher Corps projects are not expected to establish demonstration programs which reflect community based education principals overnight. But with careful planning and bringing together the appropriate agencies and institutions, these steps can be begun.

The examples and descriptions described in this paper should serve to stimulate the generation of new ideas and strategies for implementing community based education. It is the hope of the RCTR Centers that these papers on community based education will serve to help projects utilize the resources available to them to build educational delivery processes that are truly community based.

COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION: HOW HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES CAN INCLUDE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THEIR ACTIVITIES

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INTRODUCTION

The topic, "Community Based Education: How Human Service Agencies can include Education Programs in their Activities," has to be discussed within some social context to have meaning and relevance. Thus, this paper begins with an examination of the contemporary societal context in which the human service agencies play an increasingly dominant role in the lives of all citizens but especially the poor. In congested urban areas, the dominant and increasing bureaucratic nature of those helping agencies contributes in many ways to the continued powerlessness and dependence of more and more people.

Within this context the definition of human service agencies includes educational institutions. Higher education institutions are included since they are the gatekeepers to most careers and would need to be involved in any shift of responsibility for educational programs to human service agencies. The public school system, in many ways the most pervasive and comprehensive of human service agencies when broadly conceived, will also be included. The renewed interest in extending of educational programs (known by many names) into the community suggests that there may be different roles for all educational institutions.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

A discussion of the social context in which a changed role for the human service agencies may take place must begin with the philosophy on which the services is based. Excluding education--at least that segment that is publically supported--the broad spectrum of health and welfare services trace their philosophical beginnings to the Elizabethan poor laws. The essence of this philosophy was that there were the worthy poor and the clearly helpless, the orphan and the crippled. All others somehow were responsible for their

plight and would have to struggle to survive. To secure assistance from private services and later from public ones, the poor were required to prove need. In America, this philosophy was buttressed by the dominant work ethic, reinforced by religion, and supported by a form of government and economy that glorified independence and individualism.

A shift in attitude regarding the poor and subsequent government action came with the Great Depression, when the whole economy and country were so devastated that it was obvious that unemployment was due, at least in part, to the economy itself. Even so, the approach of Social Security, for example, was still rooted in the belief that everyone could eventually find a job and that pensions would be available when one was no longer able to work.

The right of government to intervene to protect more groups was well established during the New Deal. The government's approach, however, made it possible for the private sector to remain the dominant provider with the government's role limited to insuring the availability of services to all.

As the society became more industrialized and technologically complex, the policy makers realized that people were often victims of circumstances beyond their control. If citizens were to be able to exercise their options for a better life, the government would have to become the protector of the rights of individuals by expanding governmental action rather than by limiting what governmental institutions could do. This changed attitude toward the proper role of government led to an expansion of the number and type of publicly supported human service agencies.

While still struggling with the definition of their appropriate helping role, many human services agencies were forced by the pressures of the Civil Rights Movement and the Great Society agenda to become training grounds for new careers also. This expanded purpose brought the human service agency into

contact and sometimes conflict with the institutions of higher education, long viewed as the sole gatekeeper of careers and employment.

But these institutions of higher education were not immune to the forces and pressures of the 60's. They too were being confronted with demands to use their resources to a greater advantage in changing the lives of the excluded. Many were forced to reexamine their traditional mission of teaching, research and service, long seen as separate activities. The land grant colleges and teacher training institutions, the core of the publicly supported higher education system in the states, were especially hard pressed to reexamine their commitment to community service. How could educational opportunities be provided for the formerly excluded, especially the urban poor, who lived in communities adjacent to many of the urban universities? At the same time, how could academic institutions legitimately involve themselves in solving social and human problems so rampant in their own neighborhoods?

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

The response of the human service agencies to social pressures, including schools and universities, varied greatly, especially as these agencies attempted to extend and expand into the community. The examples that follow illustrate three very different approaches to community-based education. All fall within the working definition of community-based education:

> "A set of programs operated in schools and in the community by all service agencies including the university to provide a learning climate for youngsters and adults in that community."

These examples reflect the shift in philosophy regarding the appropriate role of human service agencies, especially public ones, to either remove barriers from access to opportunities or to supply assistance to those whose resources are limited.

Parenting is one of the few careers for which there is no preparation or training. Yet it is probably the most significant role anyone can have in determing the future of the society. The most precious legacy any of us can leave is our progeny as productive, contributing, happy citizens. Thus, one community-based program that could bring together several different human service agencies would be one on parenting.

Since welfare agencies are responsible for administering often the largest programs involving children and their families in a community, they are appropriate sponsors for such a program. The statistics show clearly that there has been an increase in single parent families, especially among urban blacks, that are in need of services. Further justification for the participation of these agencies is the evidence of two and three generation families "on welfare." One approach to assisting such families is training in parenting. Of more significant impact would be a program combining parenting with job training and the prospect of career mobility. The following illustration describes one way one human service agency could initiate such an educational program. Before describing this approach, the limitation for success must be emphasized. Resistance is to be expected, both from the clients who may not be able to accept this sponsorship, and from the staff of the agency. Unless there are built-in incentives and rewards for both groups, this approach is doomed to failure before it starts.

The partners joining the welfare agency in this project include an urban university, a public one (since community or public service is integral to their existence), and a day care center. The interrelated purposes of this project would be:

(1) To provide training for a group of parents (mothers and fathers) to enhance their role as parents of children in the early years;

(2) To use the expertise of the university faculty in the field of child development and early childhood education in new ways;

(3) To develop a day care program; and

(4) To begin a career ladder for those who choose work in a day care center as a way to develop skills and future job possibilities.

The outlines of the program are broad. First, the public welfare agencies must call a meeting of the interested and necessary partners: parent, university, other agencies. A joint policy-making group representing each of the agencies and the parents would then outline the responsibility of each group. The welfare agency identifies the participants. The day care center provides space for some of the sessions with the university providing space for other sessions, so that the groups will be exposed to the climate of each agency. The university and day care center personnel are responsible for designing the learning experiences for the parents. An added dimension could be the inclusion of teacherin-training from the university as observer participants. Here in a real setting they could expand their knowledge about the role of parents. As some of the parents become interested in pursuing a career as a teacher in a day care center, it becomes the responsibility of the university to devise a meaningful career ladder, which might have to begin with basic skills or completion of a high school diploma. On-the-job training as an assistant to the regular teacher is an integral part of the training program.

In such a program each group would derive different benefits. For the parents, there is the possibility of contributing to the development of their children in new ways. For those parents who could participate in career development, there is also the prospect of new and more satisfying work, and experience that might not have been possible before. For the agency and staff, a view of their services in a broader context as a helping service is provided. For the university, new training possibilities develop. But the greatest benefit would probably be to the next generation through the children who would have experienced a different beginning.

An Inter-Agency Council A second illustration is based largely on a current program at the George Washington Carver Comprehensive High School in the Atlanta, Georgia, Public School system. This program was initiated by the principal, Dr. Norris Hogans, with the active support of A. B. Padgett of the Georgia Trust Company. It is an unusual example of the collaborative work of many human service agencies using a public high school as the base of operation; it is also an example of a different type of community-based education.

The impetus for the development of this program came from the principal who recognized that the problems faced by many of the students in his school were so overwhelming that no matter what the school did to create a conducive learning climate, many of the young people would still be unable to learn. These problems were community problems not just school problems.

The student population at Carver High is close to 1400, grades 8-12, and 98% black. It offers academic programs and a full range of vocational subjects including a green house course and a food service course. The school is located near a large low-income housing project, which means

that most of the students and their families lack financial resources; many face the myriad of problems that stem from being poor. In addition, many cannot depend on the support of their families, not because of lack of concern, but because the demands of simple survival drain the energies of even the best motivated parent. In the face of these elements that exist to some degree in most urban school systems, and unwilling to leave the problems to another agency, Dr. Hogans took the initiative to find a solution that the school could be an integral part of.

The school's approach, however, was not to provide the services that were the responsibility of other designated human service agencies. Rather, the school brought these agencies together and asked them to see the child and the problems as the focal point of the services rather than the needs of the institution or agency. To begin this process of coordination an inter-agency council and a schedule of monthly monthly luncheon meeting was created. The luncheons were held at the school, therefore, the food service classes were given as opportunity to practice what they were learning. Each agency's representative attending explained their services to the total group. From that point of departure that discussed specific ways to address mutual problems. Several of the agencies, through cities in schools (as this part of the program is known), assigned one agency staff person to the high school so that proximity of the staff from the different agencies would make coordination real. Regular meetings were organized around the problems of students, focusing the resources on the total family needs.

One of the leading agencies in this collaborative effort is the Atlanta Southside Comprehensive Health Center. The Director, Ms. P. Renthrope, has devised procedures to bring the health services to the community, despite the attitudes of some staff who do not share the view that such is an appropriate role for a health center. The addition of a

young black doctor, Dr. Dwight Jones, as Director of Health Services, lends real support to the idea. The approach of the Center is to treat any health problem of a student or family as a legitimate concern worthy of a solution. To handle required physical examinations, for example, the Center sends the appropriate personnel to the school to examine students and family members.

Since one of the continuing problems at Carver High is out-of-wedlock births to high school and increasingly younger students, this school was able to interest a doctor, Dr. Robert A. Hatcher, the Family Planning Director at Grady Hospital (the county hospital) to teach a sexuality seminar for those students who do not want to become unwed mothers or fathers. He plans to spend his sabbatical from Emory Medical School full time at the school exploring the ramifications of this long-standing problem, and seeking to expand the promising approach of which the seminar is but a first step.

Another group participating in the Carver High program that is not often found in collaborative relations with a public school is The Ecumenical Community Ministry. This group of four churches sponsors a variety of programs in the homes of Carver High students. The internship of ministers in training from several of the schools of theology in Atlanta takes place in this arena. It is known as the Apartment Ministry since its locus is an apartment in the housing project and headed by a young black woman minister -- community outreach in the truest sense.

Two local universities have also been active on the interagency council: Atlanta University and Georgia State University. Plans are underway to place university staff in the high school to determine whether this coordinated approach increases, in the long run, the students' ability to cope with a difficult and often hostile world. A second evaluation

will be made of the services provided by the agencies that assigned workers to a new location. It will examine the premise that problems approached in this manner could be handled, not only more quickly but more efficiently.

The most meaningful measure of success, however, will have to wait until the next generation. It is then that we will find out if these young people were able to face the world with greater skills and confidence because their school took a different approach to their total life. And, because their school tried at least to minimize the fragmentation of services and of life experienced by so many who have had to become dependent on many human service agencies to survive.

An outgrowth of the inter-agency council has been the Family Development Center. The Center administers a program designed primarily by Rev. Bevins of the Ecumenical Community Ministry, A. B. Padgett of Georgia Trust Company, and the principal, Dr. Hogans, based on needs that emerged at the luncheon meetings. The Center, housed in the Bethlehem Community Center on the grounds of the school, offers career development and job training for 75 families whose only alternative has too often been welfare. A child care center serves the neighborhood pre-school children and provides career training placement for parents. The community-based Board of the Center employs a Director and works to secure additional funds. This is another illustration of how a community of mutual support is created through finding solutions to its own defined problems.

The involvement of the Boy Scouts has added another dimension to the program of the school, demonstrating again that with imagination and drive, young people in urban high schools can expand their horizons. Almost all of the tenth graders (350) are involved in the Explorers program. They visit ten different industries and companies in the immediate area

and throughout the city of Atlanta, where they learn first--hand about a wide range of career possibilities. The homeroom teachers, who also serve as counselors, accompany the young people on the trips so that the teachers expectations of the students are also expanded. Some of the industries have created jobs for participants so that an increasingly large number of these teenagers are given an opportunity to experience employment and to sample different careers.

The emphasis in this work program goes beyond the specific skills that might make the young person more employable. Equal stress is placed on responsibility, work habits, and appearance, the important extras that may make the difference in getting and keeping a job. An attempt is made to involve everyone in the school in these activities so that everyone is responsible for what happens, not just a few who may be directly involved in career development. This approach is the significant difference. The young people hear a consistent message from the principal, the teachers, and increasingly their parents. The conflict of values too often found among schools and their communities has been replaced by consistent beliefs in the worth of the young people, their capacity to make decisions and be responsible not only for their learning but for their behavior in and out of school.

Other agencies sponsoring programs at Carver High, and represented on the Council, are the Legal Aid Society, the Police Department, the Jaycees, the OIC, the Title XX Day Care Center, and the Street Academy. Each has a program worth examining. It is through all these efforts that Carver High School combines some of the many components of community education or community-based programs using a public high school as the hub of activity.

The human service agencies have gotten involved in a myriad of ways with the school. They provide not only educational programs but they deliver services within the school and to the total family. They offer treatment for the whole person rather than perpetuate the fragmentation that is too often a dominant characteristic of such services. One reason this approach works is the leadership and driving commitment of a couple of people, including the principal, who believed it could be done and brought together a group of persons from agencies who were able to make the idea work.

EXTENSION AGENTS

A third example illustrates a process more than a product or program involving a public university's stated mission of teaching, research and service. For many, these purposes have been seen as separate activities, with the result that service generally has been relegated to a minor role. The exceptions are those land grant colleges that became involved in the agricultural cooperative extension program as far back as 1862 with the first Morrill Act and expanded with the 1914 Smith-Lever Act.

During the 60's, when the problems of cities dominated the scene, there was renewed interest in the approach taken through cooperative extension as a model for universities and urban communities. In some of the Community Action Agencies, financed by the Economic Opportunity Act and later the Model City Agencies, attempts were made to replicate this approach. They were only minimally successful, due in large part to the magnitude of the problems and lack of ongoing financial resources on a scale of those available to the county agent. But the concept is still worth pursuing and may still hold more promise than other approaches for the way in which a university can sponsor community-based education.

Despite some problems (but what program or approach does not have some?), the agricultural extension program has done one thing well. According to Harrington, "It has demonstrated conclusively that American colleges and universities, when properly financed, can serve adults effectively in problem solving, and in action programs, without doing damage to the campus. Cooperative extension has helped build, not destroy colleges of agriculture."[1]

What is being proposed here is a role for the urban public university that replicates the best elements of the extension program. What may make the replication difficult if not impossible is the lack of adequate funding as well as the method of funding that has accompanied agriculture extension. A second difficulty may be attitudinal and rooted in the values of America--the farmer and small businessman, the primary beneficiary of extension, has status and is viewed as typical of the best of the American character showing independence, initiative, and contributing to the growth and success of the country. What we have in the cities, on the other hand, are the poor and, increasingly, the minorities. Unlike the farmers, this group is viewed negatively in this society. Blaming the victim is more often the view that the larger society, underscored by the media, has of the urban poor. Lazy, shiftless, or hostile and violent are more often the labels applied to the urban poor--labels rarely applied to the farmer or even the rural poor.

Even with these handicaps, the components of the agriculture extension agent approach are worth investigating as another way in which community-based education can be used for the purpose of empowering people excluded from the mainstream. Harrington lists five major components of cooperative extension. First, the heart of this approach is problem solving, with an emphasis on providing information about individual as well as group problems. Second, the extension program links campus research and action in the field, a merger

of pure and applied research. Third, the extension program works directly with people, using volunteers. The county agent "professor in the field" is located out in the county not on the campus so he personifies the extension program and is identified as a problem solver. A fourth component has been flexibility. Agents must be willing and able to adjust to changing needs and conditions. It is difficult to know whether this flexibility is due to secure funding or to the imagination of the county agents and universities of which they are a part. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the programs do adjust, e.g., to move from problems of increasing production in the 30's to diversifying products when over-supply became the problem.

Finally, and perhaps more important for understanding successful cooperative extension programs, is the financial arrangement. Because of the shared support system with an approximate 40-40-20 split between federal, state, and county sources, these programs can be offered free. Because there was a guarantee that the support would continue, the hand-to-mouth existence more characteristic of programs for the cities was eliminated. Interestingly enough, there has never been a charge that the no-fee policy leads to dependence on the government, as so often has been the case for urban programs. As noted earlier, shared basis funding may be the one component that is essential to a successful replication of cooperative extension for the cities.

Developing extension agents for education improvement requires that a public university be committed to providing a learning climate for residents of the community, especially its adjacent neighborhood. Such a program will have as a purpose the development of leadership to solve problems in partnership with the university. Further, it will be based on the premise that there are public universities that see their tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service as one. Holleb, in Colleges and the Urban Poor, states:

> In summary, this study begins with the assumption that it is no longer a question of whether public institutions of higher education should engage in community service activities, but rather of how best to proceed in the contemporary world. Since colleges and universities can never substitute for public and private agencies in the delivery of human services on a mass basis or arrogate to themselves the options that ultimately reside in the consumer, the community area and its members, the issues revolve chiefly around appropriate ways to draw upon the special talents, style and resources of the academic community.3

Since there are so many problems besetting the residents of the cities, the most difficult problem facing a leader at a public, urban institution desiring to institute an approach similar to the cooperative extension will be to narrow the focus to a task that can be accomplished. Nothing can be so devastating to any community group as the lack of success through concerted effort. The discouragement on the part of many urban residents is justified. As one resident of Atlanta stated, first there was the promise that through participation in the poverty program changes would occur; then came model cities in the same area with the same promise; when that failed, the city created Neighborhood Planning Units. But still in 1979, after years of faith that the system would respond, there is still poor public transportation to that part of the city; still no grocery store within walking distance of most of the residents--few of whom have cars. This history suggests that any university should be cautious in making promises it cannot keep.

CONCLUSION

These three illustrations suggest different ways that human service agencies can become involved in community-based education. Each shows how agencies can demonstrate a shift in attitude where they assist the poor to move from a posture of dependency on others to solve their problems to one of developing

power to direct their own lives through participation in programs to remove barriers and develop their own skills. To be in charge of one's life, to have options, to have access to opportunity is the promise of America. One way to move toward achieving these goals is a shift in the way human service agencies view their roles in the community.

FOOTNOTES

1
Fred Harrington, The Future of Adult Education. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 1977) p. 133.

2
Ibid, pp 123-126.

3
Doris Holleb, Colleges and the Urban Poor (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972) p. 7.

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